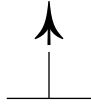




CONVERSATIONS GUIDE

BY KIM ENGELMANN



MORE THAN JUST “STUFF”: WHY CREATION MEANS TRANSFORMATION FOR OUR BODIES, OUR SELVES

BY STEVE WILKENS

In this article Wilkens describes for us the body/soul dualism that has its roots in a Platonic understanding of human nature. Wilkens argues that the integration of body and soul is critical to the Christian understanding of salvation and resurrection, whereas a dualistic model is not. The physical has been created for a purpose.



Creation is not an accident. We are more than “just stuff.” Indeed nature ought to be referred to in the classic sense not in terms of what it is, but in terms of what it should be—namely recognizing its purpose. In other words, nature is a teleological concept. God as Creator had a purpose in creating a physical universe, and its inhabitants; this is a purpose that includes the material substance of things. As Christians, we ought not talk of breaking free from a corpse in the afterlife. As Wilkens states “there is no need of a resurrection (*anastasis* which literally means ‘to stand up again’) if someone... is not dead. Second, Paul specifically includes the idea that it is a body (*soma*) that is resurrected.” In Scripture the *soma* that is resurrected has every appearance of a whole person, spiritual and physical coming back to life. We are more than the body; more

than just a collection of physiological interactions. We demonstrate aesthetic sensibility, moral judgment, reason, volition etc. Yet these qualities are embedded within meat, bones and glands. Our corporeality is not accidental to personhood. Who we are and how the physicality and spirituality of our own natures are intertwined pushes us into the realm of mystery—as it should since we are created in God’s image. God elevates the physical into the realm of the spiritual. Thus, the bread and the cup in Communion become the very means of grace; the very body and blood of Jesus Christ is our salvation.

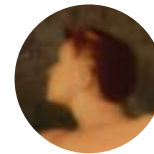
1. Have you been aware of language in Christian circles that has seemed dualistic—separated soul and body? Share with the group.
2. Do you think, as does Wilkens, that the body—the material self—is as sacred and purpose-filled as what we may call the “spiritual self”? Do you think this question is dualistic? Why or why not?
3. Wilkens used the example of Communion which is an excellent way to describe the mystery of the connection between the material and the spiritual. What other examples from Scripture or in your own life make this connection apparent?

A SACRED, GRIEVOUS MOMENT: HOW OUR RELUC- TANCE TO FAST REVEALS A WHOLE BODY DISCONNECT

BY SCOT MCKNIGHT

McKnight talks about fasting as “body talk” and discusses the duality between body and spirit. Many think of the body as the not so good part and the soul as the good part. This is erroneous. The body is extremely important in Scripture, as McKnight

points out, and also the body and the soul/spirit are embodied as a unity. Fasting is about the body and happens when we have grasped the importance of the body for our spirituality. The A→B→C pattern that McKnight holds out for fasting is as follows: sacred moment, response in fasting, and results.



We do not fast because we want something from God—a certain set of results. C never is the

motivation for B. Rather the impetus to fast comes from a sacred moment, where we have empathy for God. Just as we do not “feel” like eating when we are grieving, so if we empathize with God grieving, our fast will come out of recognizing that sacred moment. Fasting is about pathos, taking on God’s emotions in a given event. Someone sins egregiously—God is grieved; so are we and we do not eat. Or when someone dies, the same pattern prevails. If people tell us they are fasting our question should be “In response to what?” Not the more common response which is often “What are you fasting for?” Finally McKnight tells of different kinds of fasting. Normal fast or “water fast” is the fasting done when only water is consumed. Abstinence is partial food consumption, whereas absolute fasting is no water or food. Fasting is one way to express embodied spirituality, and our bodies are an important part of our spiritual expression.

1. Have you ever fasted? If yes, what was your experience like?
2. What are some sacred moments that might move you to fast?
3. Do you agree with McKnight’s assertion that the true fast is a response to a sacred moment—not to get something from God? Why or why not?
4. How do you understand fasting as body talk?

